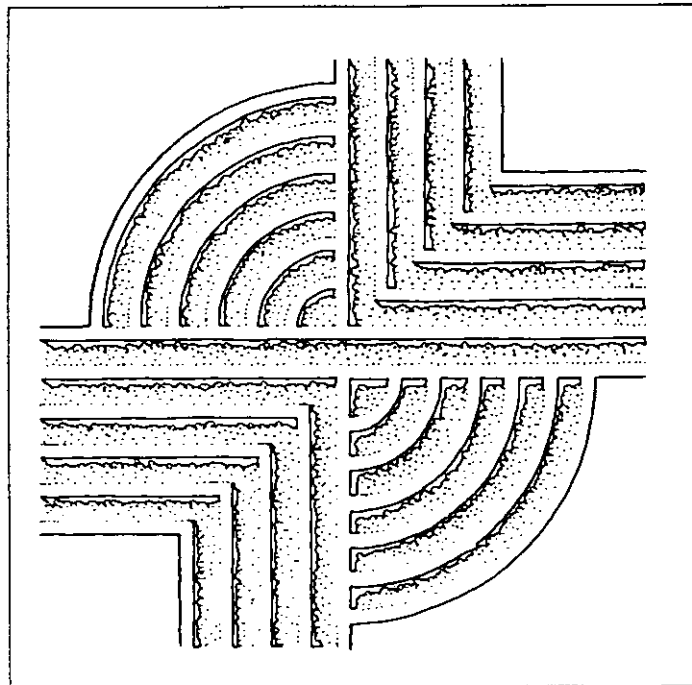


INTENSIVE SURVEY OF 1.8 ACRES, BLUFFTON,
BEAUFORT COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA



CHICORA RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION 163

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INTENSIVE SURVEY OF 1.8 ACRES, BLUFFTON,
BEAUFORT COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

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February 15, 1995

This report is printed on permanent paper ∞

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ABSTRACT

This study presents the results of an intensive archaeological survey of 1.8 acres in Bluffton, South Carolina. The primary purpose of this investigation is to identify and assess the archaeological remains present in the proposed project area.

One site (38BU717) was revisited and no new sites were identified. Site 38BU717 yielded artifacts from the St. Catherines phase and exhibited intact shell midden. In addition, some potentially cultural wood charcoal was recovered within a lens of midden. Since the site exhibits a number of data sets, it is recommended as eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This investigation was conducted by Ms. Natalie Adams of Chicora Foundation, Inc. for Mr. Ronald Feldman of Shumacker & Thompson. The 1.8 acre tract is situated northwest of Hilton Head Island, south of U.S. Hwy. 278 in the town of Bluffton (Figure 1).

The tract is vegetated primarily with live oaks and palmetto with a light to moderate understory of vegetation. It is bounded to the north by U.S. Hwy 278, to the east and south by private property, and to the west by an asphalt road. Activities which have the potential to damage or destroy archaeological sites include development of the property for business or industrial purposes. This development may include building construction, placement of utilities, and parking lot construction. Although we understand that no permitting is needed by the client, they were interested in what types of cultural resources were present on the tract for planning purposes.

Chicora received a request for a budgetary proposal by Mr. Ronald Feldman of Shumacker & Thompson. A proposal was submitted on February 2, 1995 and was accepted on February 3, 1995.

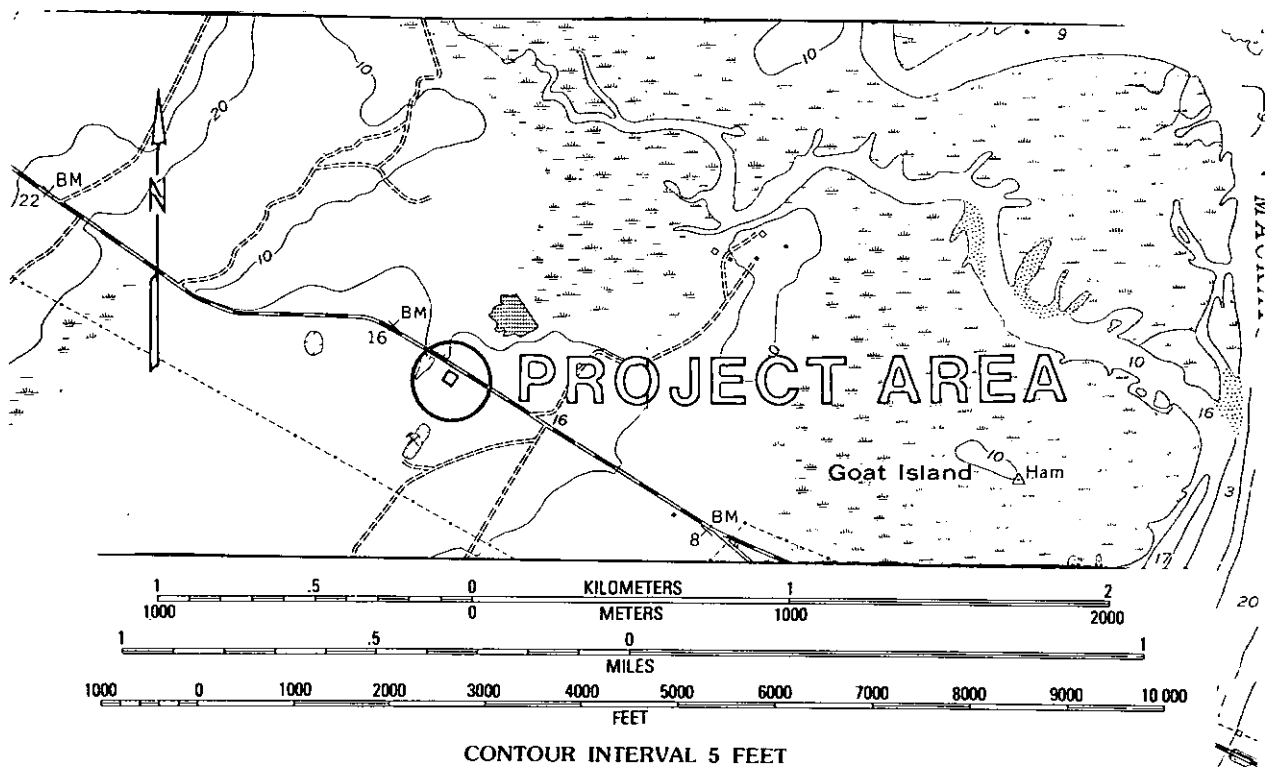


Figure 1. Location of the project area on the Bluffton quadrangle map.

This study is intended to provide a detailed explanation of the archaeological survey of the 1.8 acre tract and the findings. The statewide archaeological site files held by the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology were examined for information pertinent to the project area. In addition, the South Carolina Department of Archives & History was consulted about National Register properties in the area. No National Register properties were found to be located in or around the project area (Dr. Tracy Powers, personal communication 1995). The field investigations were conducted on February 10, 1995.

Project Area

As previously indicated, the project area is situated northwest of Hilton Head Island, south of U.S. Hwy. 278 in the town of Bluffton, Beaufort County (Figure 2). Beaufort County is situated in southeastern South Carolina and lies within the Lower Coastal Plain physiographic province. The county is bounded to the south and southeast by the Atlantic Ocean, to the east by St. Helena Sound, to the north and northeast by the Combahee River, and the west by Jasper and Colleton counties and portions of the New and Broad rivers. Elevations range from about sea level to slightly over 100 feet above mean sea level (MSL) (Mathews et al. 1980:134-135). Elevations in the project area are about 16 feet above mean sea level (MSL).

Vegetation in the project area consisted primarily of live oak and palmetto. Understory vegetation is light to moderate throughout the tract. Soils in the tract consist of excessively well drained Wando fine sand.

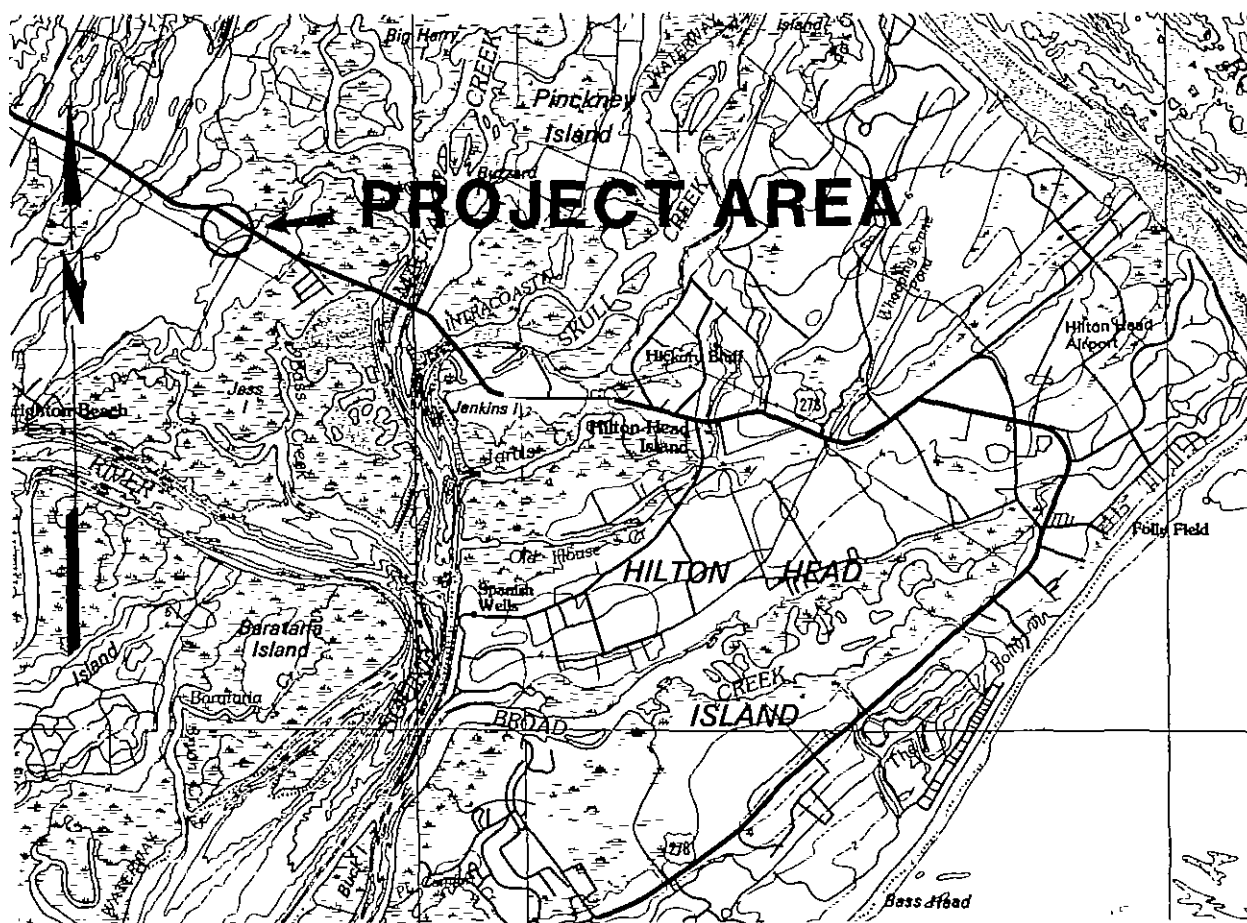


Figure 2. Location of the survey tract in the Hilton Head area.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Previous Archaeological Investigations

Previous archaeological investigations in the Hilton Head area include a reconnaissance level study of the Hilton Head Island by Trinkley (1987) and a survey level study of Pinckney Island by Drucker and Anthony (1980). In addition, testing studies on Pinckney Island include work at 38BU66, 38BU166, and 38BU167 by Charles (1984); work at 38BU93, 38BU180, 38BU181, 38BU205, 38BU213, and 38BU193 by Braley (1982).

In addition, a number of sites in the Hilton Head area have been subject to data recovery. These include several plantation studies (e.g. Adams and Trinkley 1991; Trinkley 1987; Trinkley 1990b) as well as prehistoric shell midden excavations (e.g. Espenshade et al. 1994; Kennedy and Espenshade 1991; 1992; Trinkley 1990c; 1991; Trinkley et al. 1992). These reports should be consulted for overviews on archaeology in the Hilton Head area.

One previously recorded site (38BU717) is within the proposed project area. The site was originally identified by Dr. Michael Trinkley during the survey for a proposed widening of U.S. Hwy. 278 (Trinkley 1983b). No shovel testing was attempted since it appeared that the core of the site was located approximately 300 feet from the centerline. Surface collection yielded several St. Catherine's sherds. The following year the site was revisited by Trinkley (1984) to determine if the site was in the proposed new right of way. Several new fire lanes were examined and an unspecified number of shovel tests were excavated. Recovered were a small quantity of St. Catherine's and "Untyped" series sherds, and a single red chert flake. The tests revealed that the site was outside of the proposed corridor.

Prehistoric Synopsis

Several previously published archaeological studies are available for the Beaufort area that provide additional background, including Brooks et al. (1982), DePratter (1979), and Trinkley (1981, 1986, 1990c). A considerable amount of archaeology has been conducted in the Beaufort area and these works should be consulted for broad overviews.

The Paleoindian period, lasting from 12,000 to 8,000 B.C., is evidenced by basally thinned, side-notched projectile points; fluted, lanceolate projectile points; side scrapers; end scrapers; and drills (Coe 1964; Michie 1977; Williams 1968). The Paleoindian occupation, while widespread, does not appear to have been intensive. Artifacts are most frequently found along major river drainages, which Michie interprets to support the concept of an economy "oriented towards the exploitation of now extinct mega-fauna" (Michie 1977:124).

The Archaic period, which dates from 8000 to 2000 B.C., does not form a sharp break with the Paleoindian period, but is a slow transition characterized by a modern climate and an increase in the diversity of material culture. The chronology established by Coe (1964) for the North Carolina Piedmont may be applied with little modification to the South Carolina coast. Archaic period assemblages, characterized by corner-notched and broad stemmed projectile points, are rare in the Sea Island region, although the sea level is anticipated to have been within 13 feet of its present stand by the beginning of the succeeding Woodland period (Lepionka et al. 1983:10).

The Woodland period begins, by definition, with the introduction of fired clay pottery about 2000 B.C. along the South Carolina coast. It should be noted that many researchers call the period from about 2500 to 1000 B.C. the Late Archaic because of a perceived continuation of the Archaic lifestyle in spite of the manufacture of pottery. Regardless of the terminology, the period from 2500 to 1000 B.C. is well documented on the South Carolina coast

and is characterized by Stallings (fiber-tempered) and Thom's Creek (sand or non-tempered) series pottery.

The subsistence economy during this early period on the coast of South Carolina was based primarily on deer hunting and fishing, with supplemental inclusions of small mammals, birds, reptiles, and shellfish. Various calculations of the probably yield of deer, fish, and other food sources identified from shell ring sites indicate that sedentary life was not only possible, but probable.

Toward the end of the Thom's Creek phase there is evidence of sea level change and a number of small, non-shell midden sites are found along the coast. Apparently the rising sea level inundated the tide marshes on which the Thom's Creek people relied.

The succeeding Refuge phase, which dates from about 1100 to 500 B.C., suggests fragmentation caused by the environmental changes (Lepionka et al. 1983; Williams 1968). Sites are generally small and some coastal sites evidence no shellfish collection at all (Trinkley 1992). Peterson (1971:153) characterizes Refuge as a degeneration of the preceding Thom's Creek series and a bridge to the succeeding Deptford culture.

The Deptford phase, which dates from 1100 B.C. to A.D. 600, is best characterized by fine to coarse sandy paste pottery with a check stamped surface treatment. Also present are quantities of cord marked, simple stamped, and occasional fabric impressed pottery. During this period there is a blending of the Deptford ceramic tradition of the lower Savannah, with the Deep Creek tradition found further north along the South Carolina coast and extending into North Carolina (Trinkley 1983a).

The Middle Woodland period (ca. 300 B.C. to A.D. 1000) is characterized by the use of sand burial mounds and ossuaries along the Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina coasts (Brooks et al. 1982; Thomas and Larsen 1979; Wilson 1982). Middle Woodland coastal plain sites continue the Early Woodland Deptford pattern of mobility. While sites are found all along the coast and inland to the fall line, sites are characterized by sparse shell and few artifacts. Gone are the abundant shell tools, worked bone items, and clay balls. In many respects the South Carolina Late Woodland period (ca. A.D. 1000 to 1650) in some areas of the coast) may be characterized as a continuum of the previous Middle Woodland cultural assemblage.

The Middle and Late Woodland occupations in South Carolina are characterized by a pattern of settlement mobility and short-term occupations. On the southern coast they are associated with the Wilmington and St. Catherine's phases, which date from about A.D. 500 to at least A.D. 1150, although there is evidence that the St. Catherine's pottery continued to be produced much later in time (Trinkley 1981).

The South Appalachian Mississippian period ca. A.D. 1100 to 1640) is the most elaborate level of culture attained by the native inhabitants and is followed by cultural disintegration brought about largely by European disease. The period is characterized by complicated stamped pottery, complex social organization, agriculture, and the construction of temple mounds and ceremonial centers. The earliest coastal phases are named Savannah and Irene (A.D. 1200 to 1550). Sometime after the arrival of Europeans on the Georgia coast in A.D. 1519, the Irene phase is replaced by the Altamaha phase. Altamaha pottery tends to be heavily grit tempered, the complicated stamped motifs tend to be rectilinear and poorly applied, and check stamping occurs as a minority ware.

Considerable ethnohistoric data has been collected on the Muskogean Georgia Gule Indians by Jones (1978, 1981). This group extended from the Salila River in southern Georgia northward to suggest that the Gule may have been divided into chiefdoms, with two, the Orista and the Escaumacu-Ahoya, being found in South Carolina (Jones 1978:203). During the period from 1526 to 1586, Jones places the Escaumacu-Ahoya in the vicinity of the Broad River in Beaufort County, while the Orista are placed on the Beaufort River, north of Parris Island. By the late seventeenth century the principle town of the Orista appears to have been moved to Edisto Island, about 30 miles to the north (Jones 1978:203).

The historic Yemassee Indians of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries pose special problems to

historians and archaeologists alike. They are found on the South Carolina coast from only 1685 through 1716 and they appear to represent an amalgamation of a number of different groups (Chester DePratter, personal communication 1990). The history of the Yemassee is briefly recounted by Milling (1969:98-112, 135-164). Recent investigations by Bill Green (1991) and Chester DePratter have suggested that historic Yemassee ceramics, rectilinear stamped and grit tempered, may be a gradual progression from the earlier Altamaha pottery. Since the Yemassee represent a number of different groups, it is also possible that additional archaeological investigations will identify several different "types" of Yemassee pottery reflecting differences in the groups which made up the Yemassee.

Historic Synopsis

The earliest European settlement in South Carolina consisted of French and Spanish outposts in the sixteenth century. The first attempted permanent settlement of the Carolinas was by Lucks Viscose de Ayllon in 1526. This settlement (Santa Elena) was begun in 1520 and by the winter of 1526 the colony was abandoned (Quattlebaum 1956:27).

The southern coast did not attract serious British attention until King Charles II granted Carolina to the Lords Proprietors in 1663. In August 1663 William Hilton sailed from Barbados to explore the Carolina territory, spending a great deal of time in the Port Royal area (Holmgren 1959). Almost chosen for the first English colony in South Carolina, Hilton Head Island was passed over by Sir John Yeamans in favor of the more protected Charles Town site on the west bank of the Ashley River in 1670 (Clowse 1971:23-24; Holmgren 1959:39). The early economy was based almost exclusively on Indian trade, naval stores, lumber, and cattle. Rice began emerging as a money crop in the late seventeenth century, but did not markedly improved the economic well being of the colony until the eighteenth century (Clowse 1971).

Meanwhile, Scottish Covenanters under Lord Cardross established Stuart's Town on Scot's Island (Port Royal) in 1684, where it existed for four years until destroyed by the Spanish. It was not until 1698 that the area was again occupied by the English. The town of Beaufort was founded in 1711 although it was not immediately settled.

While most of the Beaufort Indian groups were persuaded to move to Polawana Island in 1712, the Yemassee, part of the Creek Confederacy, revolted in 1715. By 1718 the Yemassee were defeated and forced southward to Spanish protection (Milling 1969). Consequently, the Beaufort area, known as St. Helena Parish, Granville County, was for the first time relatively safe from both the Spanish and the Indians. The Yemassee, however, continued occasional raids into South Carolina, such as the 1728 destruction of the Passage Fort at Bloody Point on Daufuske Island (Starr 1984:16). In the same year the Spanish hold and the remnant Indian groups made peace with the English. The results for the Beaufort area, however, were mixed. While there was a semblance of peace, frontier settlements were largely deserted, population growth was slow, and the Indian trade was diverted from Beaufort to Savannah.

Although peace marked the Carolina colony, the Proprietors continued to have disputes with the populace, primarily over the colony's economic stagnation and deterioration. In 1727 the colony's government virtually broke down when the Council and the Commons were unable to agree on legislation to provide more bills of credit (Clowse 1971:238). This, coupled with the disastrous depression of 1728, brought the colony to the brink of mob violence. Clowse notes that the "initial step toward aiding South Carolina came when the proprietors were eliminated" in 1729 (Clowse 1971:241).

While South Carolina's economic woes were far from solved by this transfer, the Crown's Board of Trade began taking steps to remedy many of the problems. A new naval store law was passed in 1729 with possible advantages accruing to South Carolina. In 1730 the Parliament opened Carolina rice trade with markets in Spain and Portugal. The Board of Trade also dealt with the problem of the colony's financial solvency (Clowse 1971:245-247).

By 1730 the colony's population had risen to about 30,000 individuals, 20,000 of whom were black slaves

(Clowse 1971:Table 1). The majority of these slaves were used in South Carolina's expanding rice industry. Although rice was grown in the Beaufort area, it did not become a major crop until after the Revolutionary War. Rice was never a significant crop on the Beaufort Sea Islands, where ranch farming was favored because of its economic returns and favorable climate (Star 1984:26-27). It was not until the 1740s that indigo became a major cash crop (Huneycutt 1949). Indigo continued to be the main cash crop of South Carolina until the Revolutionary War fatally disrupted the industry.

During the war the British occupied Charleston for over two and one-half years (1780-1782). A post was established in Beaufort to coordinate forays into the inland waterways after Prevost's retreat from the battle of Stono Ferry (Federal Writer's Project 1938:7; Rowland 1978:288). British earthworks were established around Port Royal and on Ladys Island (Rowland 1978:290). At the end of the Revolution, the removal of the royal bounties on rice, indigo, and naval stores caused considerable economic chaos with the eventual "restructuring of the state's agricultural and commercial base" (Brockington et al. 1985:34).

While freed of Britain and her mercantilism, the new United States found its economy thoroughly disrupted. There was no longer a bounty on indigo, and in fact, Britain encouraged competition from the British and French West Indies, and India "to embarrass her former colonies" (Huneycutt 1949:44). As a consequence the economy shifted to tidewater rice production and cotton agriculture. It was cotton, the Beaufort area, that brought a full establishment of the plantation economy.

Reference to the 1860 Beaufort District agricultural census reveals that of the 891,228 acres of farmland, 274,0115 (30.7%) were improved. In contrast, only 28% of the State's total farmland was improved, and only 17% of the neighboring Colleton District's farm land was improved. Even in wealthy Charleston District only 17.8% of farm land was improved (Kennedy 1864:128-129). The total cash value of Beaufort farms was \$9,900,652, while the state average by county was only \$4,655,083. The value of Beaufort farms was greater than any other district in the state for that year, and only Georgetown listed a greater cash value of farming implements and machinery (reflecting the more specialized equipment needed for rice production).

Hilton Head Island fell to Union forces on November 7, 1861 and was occupied by the Expeditionary Corps under the direction of General T.W. Sherman. Hilton Head became the headquarters for the Department of the South and served as a staging area for a number of military campaigns. As a result of the island's early occupation by Union forces, all of the plantations fell to military occupation, and a large number of blacks flocked to the island, and a "Department of Experiments" was born. An excellent account of the "Port Royal Experiment" is provided by Rose (1964), while the land policies on St. Helena are explored by McGuire (1985). This land policy study shows that blacks slowly came to own a large proportion of the available land. Certificates of possession were eventually issued for a number of sea island plantations (McGuire 1982:36). During the postbellum period previous owners slowly came forward to reclaim, or redeem, and confiscated by the Federal government. By the 1890s a program was established to provide owners unsuccessful at either restoration or redemption with token compensations (McGuire 1982:77).

During the late nineteenth century most of the sea island plantations continued as rural, isolated agrarian communities. The new plantation owners attempted to forge an economic relationship with the free black laborers and found a multitude of problems, including the need to pay higher wages, increasing problems with the cotton boll weevil, and decreasing fertility.

Woofter (1930) provides information on the agricultural practices of the St. Helena blacks in the early twentieth century, noting that the population was largely stable, with most blacks remain in the vicinity of their parents' "home" plantations (Woofter 1930:265). While islands, such as St. Helena, which were large and easily accessible began to change more rapidly during this period, the smaller, more isolated islands maintained very clear connections with the past which have been repeatedly documented through oral histories.

FIELD METHODS

Methods

The initially proposed field techniques for this intensive level survey involved the placement of shovel tests at 50 foot intervals since there was a previously identified site on the tract. The minimal definition of a site in this study was two or more artifacts within a 25 foot area.

Should sites be identified by surface collection and/or shovel testing, further tests would be used to help obtain additional data on site boundaries, artifact quantity and diversity, site integrity, and temporal affiliation. This information is required to determine site eligibility and is necessary for completion of the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology site forms. Photographs would be taken, if warranted in the opinion of the field investigator.

All soils from the shovel tests would be screened through ¼-inch mesh, with each test numbered sequentially. Each test would measure about 1 foot square and would normally be taken to a depth of at least one foot. All cultural remains would be collected, except for shell, mortar, and brick, which would be quantitatively noted in the field and discarded. Notes would be maintained for profiles at any sites encountered.

These field methods were implemented with only one deviation. The shovel test intervals were increased to 100 feet in areas where site boundaries were not in question.

As a result of the archaeological survey of the Bluffton-Hilton Head Island transmission line right of way, 20 shovel tests were placed in four transects spaced at 50 foot intervals.

Curation

It is anticipated that the field notes and artifacts will be accessioned for curation at the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology. Field notes have been prepared for curation using archival standards and will be transferred to the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology as soon as the project is complete.

RESULTS

As a result of the archaeological survey of the Bluffton-Hilton Head Island transmission line right of way, previously recorded site (38BU717) was revisited and no new sites were encountered.

Site **38BU717** is located south of U.S. Hwy. 278 in the eastern portion of the tract. The central UTM coordinates are N3566740 E517520 and the soils are excessively drained Wando fine sands. Site dimensions are unknown since it extends off of the tract to the north, south, and east. That portion of the site within the tract measures approximately 300 feet north-south by 50 to 150 feet east-west.

The site was originally recommended as potentially eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places by Trinkley (see site form, 38BU717). As a part of the widening of U.S. 278, Trinkley (1984) examined the site to determine whether it was within the proposed corridor of impact. The site's core was found to be approximately 300 feet from the centerline and outside of the right of way. During the survey several St. Catherine's and "Untyped" sherds were recovered as well as one chert flake.

During the current investigations, the survey revealed that construction activities had damaged the site off of the tract to the north, south (Figure 3), and east, and that the portion of the site within the survey area contained intact shell midden. At least two shell mounds were visible from the ground surface although sheet midden was found throughout the site.



Figure 3. Damage to 38BU717 south of the survey parcel.

Of the 20 shovel tests excavated, nine contained archaeological deposits (Figure 4). Soil profiles within the site area consisted of about 0.5 feet of dark brown fine sand (10YR4/3) overlying 0.2 to 0.8 feet of dark brown fine sand (10YR4/3) with shell midden, overlying brown (10YR5.3) sand subsoil. Table 1 provides a list of artifacts collected from the site.

Table 1.
Summary of contents from positive shovel tests at 38BU717

Provenience	Shell	Ceramics	Charcoal
T1ST1	light		
T1ST2	moderate	2 small sherds	
T1ST3	dense	2 St. Catherine's cordmarked 1 small sherd	Present
T1ST4	moderate	1 St. Catherine's cordmarked	
T1ST5	moderate		
T2ST1	moderate		
T2ST2	light		
T3ST3	moderate	2 St. Catherine's cordmarked	
T3ST4	moderate		
T3ST5	moderate		

Since this portion of site 38BU717 exhibits clear integrity with distinct mounds of shell, exclusively St. Catherine's phase artifacts, and possibly cultural wood charcoal within an intact context, it can likely address research questions related to how the St. Catherine's people used the site. These questions could include:

- What is the intra-site patterning at 38BU717? To understand the complete nature of the patterning and its meaning the site can be auger/shovel tested at close intervals and a topographic relief map can be created. Once topographic maps are created, patterns in site use can be examined. Given the integrity of this portion of the site, the issue of intra-site patterning can be addressed.
- What is a settlement at a micro-community level composed of? What is the distribution of artifacts and features in and around individual middens? Given the presence of at least two individual middens, this issue can also be addressed.
- What is the variation in the pottery of one type? For instance, are the sherds from two different St. Catherine's middens similar or different? This question can address issues of ethnic, social, or kin groups as expressed through pottery.
- What were the subsistence strategies used at the site? Since ethnobotanical remains have been found at the site and the presence of shell is conducive to faunal preservation, it is possible that subsistence strategies can be plotted.
- Why was this area only used during the St. Catherine's period? Do the shellfish (or other ecofacts) suggest an environmental reason for only brief use of the site?

While these questions are not exhaustive, they are important questions that the site has the potential to address. As a result of the sites' ability to address significant research question, we recommend that the site is eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

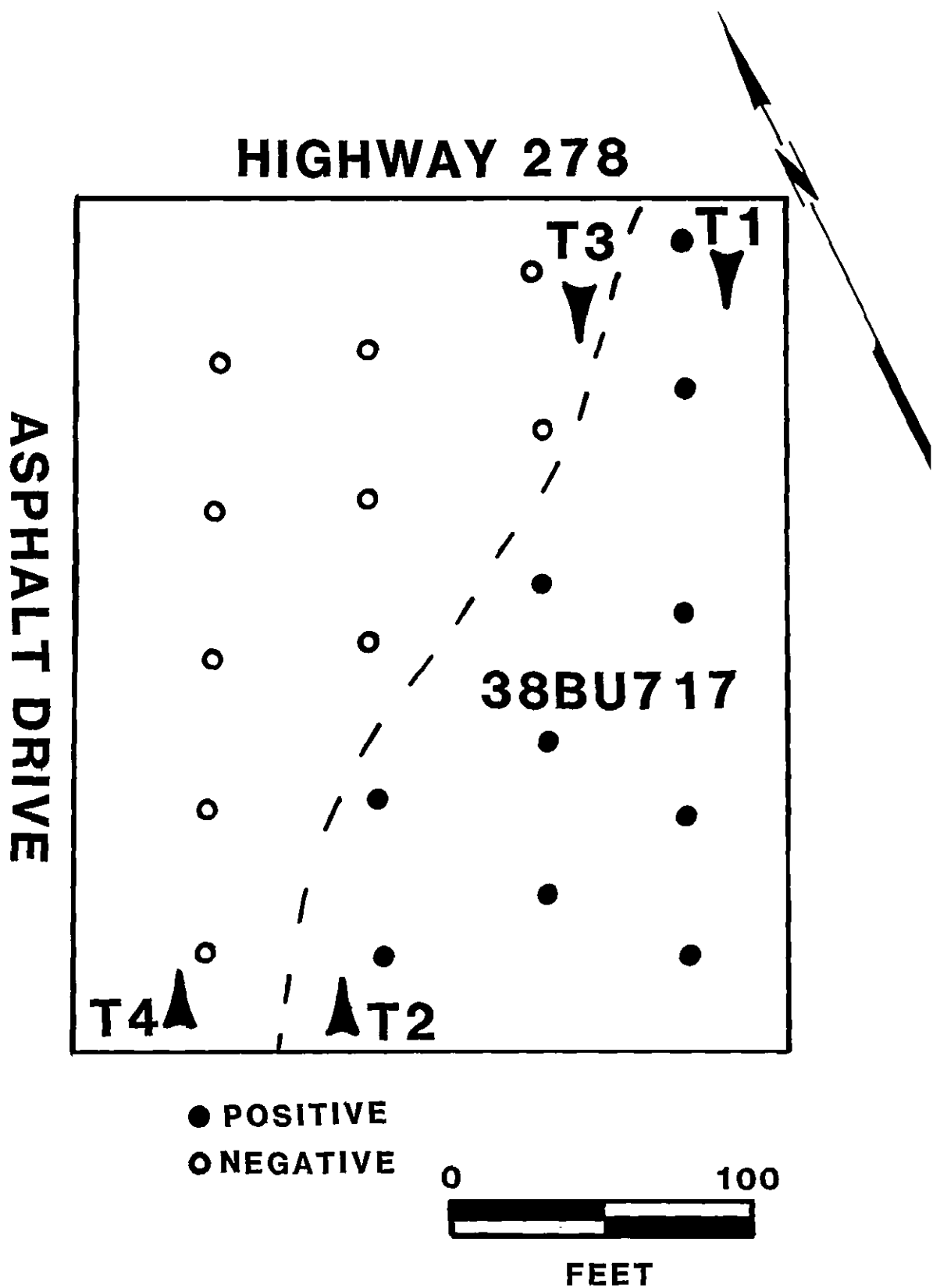


Figure 4. Shovel tests at 38BU717.

CONCLUSIONS

As a result of the survey of a 1.8 acre parcel in Bluffton, one site (38BU717) was revisited and no new sites were encountered. Site 38BU717 is recommended as eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places, based on its potential to address significant research questions regarding the St. Catherine's phase in the Hilton Head area.

As previously stated, we understand that the client does not require any permitting to develop the property. Since we have recommended the site as eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places, we would like to see the site preserved in place (green spaced). If this is not possible, some data recovery excavations would be desirable. However, since no permitting is needed, neither green spacing nor data recovery is required.

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